

March 14, 2013

The tragedy of Sandy Hook is horrific in every sense and we naturally react by wanting to prevent it from ever happening again. This is as understandable as it is justified. However, we must have the courage to fight for an actual solution and not simply placate those that ignore the data and realities by further restricting the rights of law-abiding gun owners.

The bills being proposed in the Connecticut Legislature in regards to gun violence are misguided, "knee-jerk" reactions to the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary school. These measures will infringe on our rights, while doing nothing to prevent criminals from committing crimes with illegally obtained firearms.

The right to bear arms is a Civil Right, and the proposed bills are severe Civil Rights violations. Such laws do not protect citizens' rights declared in the US Constitution. I urge the legislative body to base decisions on facts, not emotions. Reports from the Center for Disease control and the Department of Justice show that so called "Assault Weapons" are used in a very small fraction of crimes, and that the 1994 "Assault Weapons Ban" had no statistically significant affect on crime. There is no reason to pass laws that restrict our rights when very similar laws have already been proven to be ineffective.

Almost all objective data suggests we should not introduce more regulation against guns; the only way to argue for more restrictive laws and against natural rights is to appeal to emotion. This is why Governor Cuomo of New York was able to pass legislation only after a suitably visible tragedy. This is why the Brady Campaign compares US raw number of gun deaths to the numbers in European nations and ignores differences in population or neglects to mention overall rates of violence and murder. This is why the New York Times defines "children" as 1 to 24 years old, to add gang violence to the statistics of gun violence against "children." I urge you to take real actions to protect the children of our state, while having the courage to ignore the emotional calls to permanently restrict the rights of law-abiding citizens.

The fact is that Connecticut already has one of the strictest AWBs in the nation, which did nothing to prevent this tragedy. The majority of states have less restrictive legislation, and yet this tragedy happened here. The Federal AWB did not stop the Columbine shootings. Semi-automatic rifles have been available since 1885, and the modern sporting rifles that are being vilified have been available since the 1960s. Yet school shootings are a new phenomenon. Why logically, would any "common sense" approach look at what factors have been constant and disregard the factors that are recent? We blame the driver for texting or drinking when driving, so why would we blame an object when guns are involved?

There is no getting around the reality that in some form, mental health played the biggest role in this tragedy. This is of course a difficult and complex topic in its own right. I find it disturbing that because it is such a difficult topic to address, as a society we are content to accept it. Our efforts must be spent on providing better mental health services to individuals and their families, and preventing criminals and the mentally ill from obtaining firearms. Simply eliminating the tool used in a crime does not address the motive for the crime. This short-sighted approach is ineffective and places the burden on law-abiding citizens.

Lastly, and most importantly, no discussion of gun laws can legitimately be carried on without including the lawful use and benefit of guns. It is a simple risk vs. benefit equation. We apply this same logic with cars, medicine, and even alcohol, each with obvious and frequent negative impacts. However, when something as dramatic and as newsworthy as the Sandy Hook massacre occurs, much of the media seems content to ignore half that risk-benefit equation when it comes to guns. There is ample and real data that every day the defensive use of guns saves people, most often without a shot ever being fired.

In conclusion, I hope that you will work toward real solutions and have the courage to not make law abiding gun owners the collective scapegoat of this situation.

Respectfully,

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